REMARKS

The undersigned would like to thank Examiner Manoharan for the courtesies extended during a telephone interview on April 8, 2003. John Foryt also participated in the interview.

During the interview, the scope of the invention and the Lovett '064, Lovett '120 and Borrel references were discussed. The arguments presented are set forth below. The Examiner suggested the amendments that have been made to Claim 1. While no agreement was reached regarding the allowability of the claims, the Examiner indicated that she would reconsider the rejections in view of any amendments and the arguments that had been made.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to the Declaration and indicated that a new oath or Declaration in compliance with 37 C.F.R. 1.67(a) was required. Enclosed herewith is a new Declaration complying with the rules.

Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. By this paper, Applicants have amended Claims 2-5 and 9-11 to correct the deficiencies noted by the Examiner.

Claims 1-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lovett in view of Borrel. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection in view of the following comments.

The present invention is directed to a process and system for the recovery of acrylonitrile from a reactor effluent stream wherein the effluent stream is quenched with an aqueous quench and then passed through an absorption column. The absorber bottoms stream from the absorption column is then passed through a single recovery and stripper column to generate an acrylonitrile-rich overhead stream, a lean water side stream, and a recovery and stripper bottoms stream that comprises organic impurities without the use of an enrichment column.

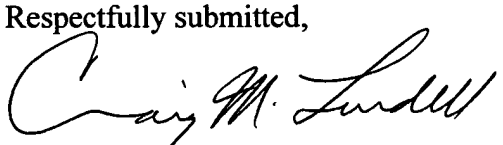
The Lovett reference (4,404,064) discloses a process for the recovery and purification of acrylonitrile that utilizes separate recovery and stripper columns. However, the recovery column is stacked directly on top of the stripper column. The Lovett '064 patent does suggest at Column 7, lines 57-59 that it is possible to operate the recovery column and stripper column as one large column, as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 3, 399,120 in Figure 2. Referring to Figure 2 of the Lovett '120 patent, it can be seen that this process utilizes an enriching Column 27. See Lovett '120 at Column 5, lines 43-70.

Accordingly, the Lovett references do not disclose nor suggest the use of a single recovery and stripper column without an enrichment column. Additionally, the Borrel reference neither teaches nor suggests this feature, either alone or in combination with the Lovett references. Further, Borrel discloses a process for the purification of acrylonitrile in which the feed is over 90% acrylonitrile. It does not disclose a process in which the feed comes from an absorption column nor does it disclose a lean water side stream that can be recycled to the absorption column. In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the current claims would not have been obvious in view of the references cited by the Examiner.

Applicants have further amended the specification to indicate that this application is a continuation-in-part of Application Serial No. 09/333,431 filed June 15, 1999, now abandoned, and also claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/089,352 filed June 15, 1998.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are now in condition for allowance and favorable action by the Examiner is earnestly requested. Should the Examiner find any impediment to the prompt allowance of the claims that could be corrected by a telephone interview, the Examiner is requested to initiate such an interview with the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



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